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Abstract: In the essay “To Speculate – On ‘Freud,’” which is published in *The Postcard: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond* (1980) and draws upon the last part of his unedited lecture course on *La Vie la mort* (taught in 1975-76), Jacques Derrida engages a close reading of Sigmund Freud’s *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. This article focuses on the deconstruction of the Freudian concept of drive (*Trieb*) that Derrida unfolds across his reading. It traces the analysis of the movement of autotelicity (*auto-télie*) that, according to Derrida, underpins the drive’s relation to itself, and argues that the French philosopher interprets a specific drive evoked (but not thematized) by Freud, the drive to power (*Bemächtigungstrieb*), as the figure of the deconstruction of that autotelicity. Furthermore, the article suggests that the implications of this argument extend beyond Derrida’s early reading of Freud, since they cast a new light on the argument for replacing the concept of sovereignty with that of the drive to power, which Derrida elaborates in his late political analyses.

Keywords: Freud, Derrida, sovereignty, power, drive, binding

DRIVE TO DRIVE: THE DECONSTRUCTION OF THE FREUDIAN *TRIEB*

“What is to be done with what is called the unconscious, and thus with the spaced divisibility, the hierarchized multiplicity, and the conflict of forces it imposes on sovereign identity?”
(Derrida 2003, 54)

1. The drive to sovereignty

In the passage chosen as the exergue of this essay, Jacques Derrida argues for the inescapable effects of the unconscious upon sovereignty, of psychoanalysis upon juridical and political conceptions. He identifies these effects with three figures, among which I draw attention to the last one, that of the conflict of forces. We will see that this argument is recurring in Derrida's late texts, such as *The Beast and the Sovereign I* (2001-2002) and *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason* (2003). For Derrida, one should start political analyses from the latter's articulation with psychoanalysis and thus, rather than of sovereignty, one should speak of a drive to, or a struggle for, power. Ultimately, one should place the burden of political analyses on the psychoanalytic concepts of drive and struggle.

In what follows, I aim to demonstrate that this argument rests on the *deconstruction* of the Freudian concepts of sovereignty (*Herrschaft*) and drive (*Trieb*) which Derrida displays in the earlier “To Speculate – On ‘Freud’” [SOF] (extracted from the unedited seminar *La Vie la mort*, 1975, and published in *The Postcard: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, 1980). In so doing, I call for a closer engagement with the aforementioned text, whose relevance to the philosophical interrogation of concepts such as sovereignty and drive, within and beyond Derrida's work, has been evidently overlooked.¹ By this deconstruction, I mean the textual work through which Derrida shows that sovereignty and drive, understood as movements of teleological autoinstitution, or, as we see later, autotelicity, are illusionary experiences, and that there is anything but the drive to power (*Bemächtigungstrieb*), or the drive to drive, with all that this implies. This singular concept of the drive to power (or to drive), which results from the deconstruction of sovereignty and of the drive in general, accounts for the knot of the articulation between psychoanalysis and political questions evoked in the exergue and thus for the point of departure for new political analyses.²

Prior to focusing on the deconstruction of the Freudian concepts of sovereignty and drive, I summarize Derrida's argument for the struggle of sovereignty across his aforementioned late texts.

Let us start with *Rogues*, as it allows us to highlight the key steps of this argument. First, Derrida draws together under the concept of “*ipseity* in general” a set of “figures” and “movements” (including “sovereign self-determination,” “the self-same that gives itself the law,” “autotelicity,” etc.) that consists in self-relation as a teleological auto-institution (“self-relation as being in view of itself”), that is, so to speak for now, as the condition in which the self (or the autos) is constituted by the desire for its achieved form (namely, *telos*).³ Second, Derrida parses that there is no pure sovereignty in the terms of the traditional concept of sovereignty. In fact, although it withdraws in principle from time and language, because of its indivisibility, sovereignty cannot help dividing itself within time and language. This is what Derrida calls sovereignty’s auto-immunity.⁴ Third, given the inescapable division of sovereignty, there is no opposition of sovereignty to non-sovereignty but struggle of sovereignties or between sovereignty and countersovereignty (for instance, between Nation-states and International Organizations), and thus struggle for sovereignty, which again falls under the name of sovereignty’s auto-immunity.⁵ Fourth, drawing on the previous points, we should substitute the concept of pure sovereignty for that of the desire for, or of the tendency to, sovereignty,⁶ or for the concept of sovereignty compulsion,⁷ or for the drive to sovereignty.⁸ In a passage from the 2001-2002 seminar on the *Beast and the Sovereign* (session 11), Derrida reproduces his argument for the non-existence of pure sovereignty or sovereignty in itself and the necessity of replacing it, as the very stake of politics as well as the point of departure of political questions, with the Freudian concept of the drive to power (*Bemächtigungstrieb*). This concept stands for the division of sovereignty, the opposition of sovereignty to sovereignty, the struggle for sovereignty, sovereignty compulsion, and so forth. Derrida writes:

“If most often what is at stake in politics and wherever else a drive to power is exercised (*Bemächtigungstrieb*, as Freud calls it, before or beyond the other drives and the death drive) ... is not only an alternative between sovereignty and nonsovereignty but also a struggle for sovereignty, transfers and displacements or even divisions of sovereignty, then one must begin not from the pure concept of sovereignty but from concepts such as drive, transference, transition, translation, passage, division. Rather than on sovereignty itself, which at bottom perhaps never exists as such, as purely and simply itself ... it is on these properly mediate words and concepts, impure like middles or mixtures (words and concepts such as transfer, translation, transition, tradition, inheritance, economic distribution, etc.) that we must bring the charge of the question and of decisions that are always median, medial transactions, negotiations in a relation of force between drives to power that are essentially divisible.” (Derrida 2009, 290-91)

Here Derrida establishes an explicit link between politics and psychoanalysis, between the division of sovereignty and the recourse to the drive to power. As anticipated, this link presupposes the elaboration of the Freudian concepts of sovereignty and drive that Derrida had put forward in his earlier reading of Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) in SOF. In particular, it hinges on Derrida's interpretation of the concept of the drive to power as the quasi-transcendental condition for the driveness (*pulsionnalité*) of the drive—the drive before or beyond all drives, as suggested in the above quoted passage—that is, for the ipseity (sovereignty, autotelicity, etc.) of the drive in general. In the subsequent analyses, I put to the test the hypothesis that, for Derrida, the drive to power, also designated as the drive to drive, is not merely a figure of sovereignty but the concept that the deconstruction of the teleological autoinstitution that constitutes sovereignty (including the sovereignty of the drive) lets irrupt.

It seems to me that Derrida scholarship has highlighted the link between sovereignty and drive to power but has not seen that the argument for replacing sovereignty with the drive to power in political analyses rests on the role that, according to Derrida, the drive to power plays in the Freudian theory of drives, that of the deconstruction of the Freudian concepts of sovereignty and drive. For this reason, I propose engaging in a careful re-examination of Derrida's reading of Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. In an important essay on Derrida's late elaboration of the figure of *Walten*, Laura Odello traces the concept of sovereignty drive that we have seen at work in *Rogues* back to the Freudian concept of the drive to power, or *Bemächtigungstrieb* (which captures Derrida's attention in SOF despite its apparent marginality in Freud's text), and to the drive to the proper (which, as we see later, Derrida somehow extrapolates from Freud's text). It is already in SOF, she remarks, that Derrida speaks of power/appropriation in terms of drive.⁹ Thus, she summarizes the features of *Bemächtigungstrieb* and of the drive to the proper and suggests a correspondence between sovereignty and the auto-affection described by these drives.¹⁰ Alternatively, my analyses demonstrate that the drive to the proper and the drive to power are new concepts that emerge from the deconstruction of autotelicity, which, according to Derrida, accounts for the drive's self-relation.

2. The deconstruction of autotelicity

It is time to re-open Freud's *Beyond* in the wake of the reading that Derrida engages in SOF. We start by focusing on Derrida's analysis of autotelicity. We can distinguish two moments in this analysis: a first moment, in which Derrida displays the movement of autotelicity that describes the

relation of psychoanalytic theory to itself; and a second moment, in which he sheds light on the deconstruction of that movement.

As Derrida points out, autotelicity is at stake from the incipit of the *Beyond*, in which psychoanalysis relates to itself (through the mediation of its founder, Freud) as to the achieved form (that of an established and recognized institution) it aims to be. “In the theory of psychoanalysis we have no hesitation in assuming ...” (Freud 1961, 1), Freud begins. Derrida suggests that the self-relation implicit in this statement consists in the movement of the self’s (or Freud’s) writing or posting a text to itself. This suggestion draws on the Husserlian argument for writing and its durability as the condition of possibility of idealization and the ideal institution in general, which Derrida illustrates in his “Introduction” to Husserl’s *Origin of Geometry* (1962).¹¹ Within this movement of self-writing and -posting, the self answers for the text that it wrote and posted to itself. Therefore, Derrida writes:

“He is attesting to an act whose contract implies that the act come back [*revienne*] to him, and that he answer for it. In a certain way he seems to have contracted only with himself. *He would have written himself*. To himself, as if someone were sending himself a message informing himself by certified letter, on an official document, of the attested existence of a theoretical history to which he himself—such is the content of the message—gave the send-off [*coup d' envoi*].” (Derrida 1987, 274)

However, we know from Derrida’s further elaboration of the Husserlian argument in *Voice and Phenomenon* (1967) that the written and posted text works beyond or thanks to the death of its originary author (and meaning) and thus is always the text of the other.¹² Here you have what Derrida designates as the work of death or arche-writing. The self thus relates through the written and posted text to the other rather than to itself, to the other that it is to itself, or to itself as the other. In *Voice and Phenomenon*, Derrida explains that even in the interior monologue, when I hear myself speak, which, for Husserl, constitutes the privileged condition for idealization, a written and posted text is required.¹³ Therefore, as his reading of the *Beyond* goes on, Derrida takes up again the analysis of autotelicity, this time in relation to the sovereignty of the pleasure principle, by deconstructing it, that is, by showing that the written and posted text is the text of the other and that the self relates to it as such.

In *Beyond* 1, Freud advances the hypothesis that the psychic apparatus is dominated by the pleasure principle (PP) on the basis of which it aims to keep the quantity of energy in it as low and

constant as possible. This principle is a consequence of Fechner's principle of constancy, that is, of the fact that the pleasure in the psychic apparatus follows from psycho-physical motions that tend to complete stability.¹⁴ Among the circumstances that inhibit the PP, first Freud draws attention to the familiar case of the replacement of the PP by the reality principle (PR), which occurs under the influence of the ego's drives to self-preservation when the PP is regarded as ineffective and highly dangerous. Freud observes:

"From the point of view of the self-preservation of the organism among the difficulties of the external world, it [the pleasure principle] is from the very outset inefficient and even highly dangerous. Under the influence of the ego's instincts of self-preservation, the pleasure principle is replaced by the reality principle. This latter principle does not abandon the intention of ultimately obtaining pleasure, but it nevertheless demands and carries into effect the postponement of satisfaction, the abandonment of a number of possibilities of gaining satisfaction and the temporary toleration of unpleasure as a step on the long indirect road to pleasure." (4)

As this passage points out, the PR retains "the intention of ultimately obtaining pleasure" (4) and thus serves the mastery of the PP over the psychic apparatus. Taking up this moment in Freud's *Beyond*, Derrida uncovers the deconstruction of the autotelicity at work in sovereignty. Before starting my analysis of Derrida's reading, I recall that here he designates the mastery (*Herrschaft*, *domination*) of the PP as a "sovereign mastery" (*souveraine domination*, Derrida 1987, 282). Derrida summarizes the case of the inhibition of this mastery by suggesting to read the replacement of the PP by the PR in the terms of a master/slave relation. "When the simple, direct, and imprudent affirmation of the pleasure principle puts the organism into danger," he writes, "then the 'ego's instincts of self-preservation' force the principle ... into *leaving* the reality principle in its place as a delegate, its courier, its lieutenant, or its slave" (282). Therefore, he goes on, "the reality principle imposes no definitive inhibition, no renunciation of pleasure, only a detour in order to defer enjoyment, the waystation of a *differance* (*Aufschub*)," in which "the pleasure principle submits itself, provisionally and to a certain extent, to its own lieutenant" (282). Here we find ourselves again before the movement of teleological autoinstitution that we have seen at stake in the opening line of the *Beyond*.¹⁵ As Derrida remarks, the relation between the PP and the PR can be read as the self's relation to itself through the mediation of the text that it posted or sent to itself, as the self's writing or posting to itself. "As if the latter produced a *socius*," Derrida explains, "[as if it] put in 'motion' an institution by signing a contract with 'discipline,' with the assistant master or foreman

who nevertheless does nothing but represent him” (282). Derrida also suggests that we understand this self-relation as a self-binding, the self’s binding itself to itself.¹⁶ However, this time, he pushes his reading of the structure of autotelicity to its limits by highlighting that the text is not the text of the self, that there is no self’s relating to itself through the text, and, finally, that the self relates to the text of the other, the other that it is to itself. “He [the master, PP] *writes himself, sends himself,*” Derrida argues, “the detour can no longer be mastered, and rather than its length *its structure* [my emphasis], then the return to (one)self is never certain” (282). From this, it follows that self-relation, described here as a master/slave relation, consists in the relation of the self to the other that it is to itself, that is, to the text of the other, which is required by idealization. Here Derrida appeals to “*differance*,” which he elaborates in *Voice and Phenomenon* as the movement by which the self relates to itself as to the other, that is, to the text of the other, in idealization. He writes:

“There is no longer any *opposition*, as is sometimes believed, between the pleasure principle and the reality principle. It is the same *differant*, in *differance* with itself. But the structure of *differance* then can open onto an alterity that is even more irreducible than the alterity attributed to opposition. Because the pleasure principle ... enters into a contract only with itself, reckons and speculates only with itself or with its own metastasis, because it sends itself everything it wants, and in sum encounters no opposition, it unleashes [*déchaîne*] in itself the absolute other.” (283)¹⁷

This passage displays the deconstruction of the autotelicity underpinning sovereignty and ipseity in general. Sovereignty understood as the self’s writing or posting a text to itself, and thus binding itself to itself, presupposes *differance* and thus the self’s relation to itself as to the other that it is to itself, that is, to the text or the bond of the other. Derrida concludes that Freud could end his search for a beyond the pleasure principle with the deconstruction of autotelicity, there where “the speculative possibility of the absolutely-other (than the pleasure principle) is already inscribed” (303). From this perspective, the beyond or the wholly other is the text of or the bond to the other. Furthermore, he makes explicit that *differance* constitutes the movement (“the effectivity,” as he puts it with some reservations) of the living process of the psychic.¹⁸ He designates this movement as the *tele-* implicit in the *teleo-*logical, that is, as the very structure of the text that the self writes and sends to itself through the postal network.¹⁹ As we have seen, this structure accounts for the work of death or the arche-writing implicit in that text, that is, for the iterability that makes it work independently from its author and thus makes it into the text of the other, namely, the text *tout*

court. According to Derrida, the demonic, as it is put forward by Freud in the *Beyond*, namely, as the repetition of repetition, or as automatic repetition, offers a figure for that structure:

“The demon is that very thing which *comes back* [*revient*] without having been called by the PP. The demon is the *revenance* which repeats its entrance, coming back [*revenant*] from one knows not where (‘early infantile influences,’ says Freud), inherited from one knows not whom, but already persecutory, by means of the simple form of its return, indefatigably repetitive, independent of every apparent desire, *automatic* ... this automaton comes back [*revient*] without coming back [*revenir*] to anyone, it produces effects of ventriloquism without origin, without emission, and without addressee. It is only posted, the post in its ‘pure’ state, a kind of mailman [*facteur*] without destination. *Tele*—without *telos* [my emphasis]” (Derrida 1987, 341-42)

This passage draws attention to the problem of repetition as intimately linked to the deconstruction of autotelicity and sovereignty. As we see later when examining Derrida’s interpretation of Freud’s concept of *Bindung*, what has been called the text until now draws together two indissociable kinds of repetition that we can identify as the *teleological* repetition and the demonic or automatic one (a certain *tele*-repetition).

At this point, it is worth recalling the analysis of the deconstruction of the mastery of the PP that an influential reader of Derrida, Martin Hagglund, offers in his *Dying for Time* (2012). In the following remarks, I limit myself to laying the ground for a closer engagement with Hagglund’s interpretation of Derrida’s work (including his *Radical Atheism: Derrida and the Aftermaths of Life*, 2009). In chapter 4 of *Dying for Time*, Hagglund takes up Derrida’s *Postcard* as the key reference for his argument. He explains that Derrida’s “postal principle provides a congenial way to describe the temporal constitution of libidinal bonds” (Hagglund 2012, 132).²⁰ Hagglund summarizes the postal principle as follows:

“In sending a letter, one binds oneself both to the material support of the letter and to the other who receives it ... The letter may be destroyed or end up in the wrong hands. And even if it arrives safely, the interval between sender and addressee is a source of disquietude in itself. When the letter arrives, the sender may already be dead or no longer subscribe to the meaning of the letter. This is a *necessary possibility*, which is latent even when the correspondence apparently works smoothly. To send a letter is by definition to inscribe a trace of the past that is addressed to a future that may erase it” (132).

Furthermore, Hagglund points out that this principle “does not supervene on an immediate presence that is *first* given in itself and *then* sent forward/backward in time,” it is rather “the condition for auto-affection in general” (132). Finally, the postal principle constitutes the “principle of survival”: in other words, “the trace of the past is the condition for anything to live on in time, but in living on it is exposed to erasure, since it is delivered to a future that may transform, corrupt, or delete it” (133). On my reading, here Hagglund wishes to limit the effects of Derrida’s postal principle. As I have attempted to demonstrate above, what is at stake with the postal principle is the deconstruction of autotelicity and thus the “effectivity” of the self’s binding itself to the other that it is to itself, the effectivity of a discontinuous weave of bonds, texts, or posts. By understanding this deconstruction as the survival of the self at the price of its exposure to death, as Hagglund seems to advocate, one keeps subscribing to the illusory experience of the self’s teleological institution and thus one wishes to master the deconstruction of this experience and the implications of it.

3. *Bindung Theorie*

As we have seen above, Derrida interprets autotelicity (self-writing or self-posting) also as the bond that the self fastens with itself. In the subsequent analyses, we discover that this bond, namely, *Bindung*, constitutes another figure of the deconstruction of sovereignty.

Derrida finds the concept of *Bindung* in the explanation of the genesis of the PP that Freud has in *Beyond* 4-5. In chapter 4, Freud argues that the dreams of patients suffering from traumatic neurosis “afford us a view of a function of the mental apparatus which, though it does not contradict the pleasure principle, is *nevertheless* independent of it and seems to be more primitive than the purpose of gaining pleasure and avoiding unpleasure” (Freud 1961, 26). Since they keep leading the patient back to the origin of their trauma, they can no longer be explained according to the PP, thus as the fulfilment of wishes, but as attempts to carry out “another task,” such as that of binding and mastering the stimulus (26). As Freud had explained earlier on, in the case of traumatic events, when a stream of excitations is “powerful enough to break through the protective barrier of the psychic apparatus,” the mastery of the PP is put out of service (23). The problem, Freud goes on, becomes that of “mastering the amounts of stimulus which have broken in and of binding them, in the psychical sense, so that they can then be disposed of” (24). To this end, the apparatus reacts to the invasion by summoning up against that stream “a cathectic energy,” namely, an “anti-cathexis,” which provides “sufficiently high cathexes of energy in the environs of the breach” (24). In *Beyond* 5, Freud formalizes this explanation by introducing the concepts of primary and secondary

processes, the former meaning “the impulses arising from the instincts do not belong to the type of bound nervous processes but of freely mobile processes which press towards discharge,” and the latter being “the process obtaining in our normal waking life” (28). Freud argues that the higher strata of the psychic apparatus carry out a task preceding the mastery of the PP, which consists in “[mastering and] binding the instinctual excitation reaching the primary process” (28). This task, he concludes, “would have precedence not, indeed, in opposition to the pleasure principle, but independently of it” (29).

Derrida draws attention to this moment of Freud’s text with a view to revealing the deconstruction of the autotelicity that is at stake in the movement of PP’s self-binding. First, Derrida remarks that Freud takes account of a non-autochthonous genesis of the PP hinging on a sort of preliminary or intermediate synthesis of the unbound. This synthesis takes place between the PP and free energy. Derrida writes:

“This latter therefore would be a relatively late effect of a history, of an original genesis, a prior victory on a field that does not belong to the PP in advance, and of which the PP is not even a native [*autochtone*]: victory and capture, binding triumphs over unbinding, the band over the contra-band, or even the contra-band over the a-band or the disband. Over absolute astricture, if some such thing could take place and shape.” (Derrida 1987, 350)²¹

Secondly, Derrida links the function or task of this synthesis to a tendency to binding and mastering that is preliminary to that of the PP. “*Before* [emphasized in French] the instituted mastery of the PP,” Derrida notes, “there is *already* a tendency to binding, a mastering or structuring impulse that foreshadows the PP without being confused with it” (351). Later, we see that this tendency, which can be designated as the drive to bind and master, does not consist in a drive before the drive, but in the drive to drive, that is, in another figure of the autotelicity implicit in the concept of sovereignty and of the drive, and, more precisely, of the deconstruction of autotelicity. Third, Derrida insists on the mediate character of this preliminary synthesis. He describes it as an intermediate zone between primary and secondary process and thus as the partial or differential stricture of a belt, or as a lace between the unbound and the absolute binding of sovereignty.

“A median, *differing or indifferent* zone (and it is differing only by being indifferent to the oppositional or distinctive difference of the two borders), relates the primary process in its ‘purity’ ... to the ‘pure’ secondary process entirely subject to the PP. A *zone*, in other words a *belt* between

the pp and the PR, neither tightened nor loosened *absolutely*, everything *en différance de stricture*. The differential stricture of a belt. Their overlap: PP+PR/pp. The apparent indecision of this belt or detached lace: such is the concept of repetition that agitates this entire text. Such a concept, the conceptuality or conceptual form of this concept, has the *allure* of this lace of differential stricture. More or less tightened, it passes like a lace (for example, a shoe lace) through both sides of the object, which here is repetition *itself*.” (373)

Although Derrida is not explicit here, we can suppose that *Bindung* plays the role of the text that the self writes and posts to itself in the autotelicity of the PP. From this perspective, *Bindung* refers to the liberation of the absolutely other in the movement through which the self binds itself. A few pages later, commenting on a passage from the last chapter of the *Beyond* where Freud returns to the function of binding the primary process, Derrida argues that *Bindung* can be understood precisely as the textual, postal, or telic structure that irrupts from the deconstruction of teleological autoinstitution. In *Beyond* 7, Freud remarks that the aforementioned function constitutes one of the most fundamental functions of the mental apparatus and consists in a supplementary or representative (we may say, in Derrida’s terms, postal or telic) operation. It amounts to “replacing the primary process ... by the secondary process,” Freud writes, “and convert their freely mobile cathectic energy into a mainly quiescent (tonic) cathexis” (Freud 1961, 56). Drawing on this passage, Derrida makes explicit his interpretation of *Bindung* as a figure of the text (post, tele-, and so forth) and thus of the deconstruction of sovereignty and autotelicity. “To bind,” he explains, “is also *to detach*, to detach a representative, to send it on a mission, to liberate a missive in order to fulfill, at the destination, the destiny of what it represents. A *post* effect. *Of a postman [facteur] charged with proceeding toward delivery*” (Derrida 1987, 394).

But, let us go back to Freud’s concluding remarks on the function of binding. They also summarize the ambivalent relation between the drive to binding and the sovereignty of the PP. This drive is at once indifferent and functional to the sovereignty of the PP. “While this transformation is taking place no attention can be paid to the development of unpleasure,” Freud notes, “not imply the suspension of the pleasure principle ... the binding is a preparatory act which introduces and assures the dominance of the pleasure principle” (Freud 1961, 56). *Bindung* draws together *precedence* (or indifference) and *preparation*, automatism and servitude, tele- and teleology. How to bring them into accord, Derrida wonders: “How to adjust the *telos* to indifference, the ends of one to the ends of the other?” (Derrida 1987, 396).²² As anticipated, *Bindung* works as this accord or adjustment, as the link between demonic and meaningful repetition, as the very structure of the

deconstruction of autotelicity. Before unfolding this final point, it is worth recalling that Derrida concludes his reading of this moment of *Beyond* 7 by speculating on the figure of the discontinuous and yet to come volume that interweaves together texts, posts, or bonds.²³ If we understand history and life as this ceaseless movement of teleological autoinstitution and thus as this scene of writing, we may think of it, with Derrida, as a ceaseless *Bindung* which keeps on deferring the sovereignty of the PP as well as the achievement of pleasure. As Derrida puts it, “a *Bindung* which tends, stretches itself and ceaselessly posts (sends, detaches, displaces, replaces) to the extreme, without conclusion, without solution, without acting, and without a final orgasm ... along the line of the greatest tension, at the limit of the beyond of the PP” (397).

At this point, we focus on Derrida’s hypothesis that *Bindung* constitutes the articulation of two repetitions. As he makes explicit, this hypothesis rests on his argument for the reversibility of the two repetitions at work in Platonism, which he had developed in his earlier essay entitled “Plato’s Pharmacy” (1968). In this text, as he recalls in SOF, he argues that the two repetitions “repeat one another” (352).²⁴ Furthermore, he identifies the two repetitions as: (a) a classical repetition, which comes after an antecedent fact to which it relates as the referent to the signified²⁵; and (b) a deconstructive repetition, which consists in the autonomous and automatic repetition of a text or of the devil.²⁶ Apropos of this second repetition, he notes that, “older than the PP, and even permitting itself to be repeated by the PP,” it “haunts the PP, undermining it, threatening it, persecuting it” (352). In order to develop Derrida’s hypothesis on the link between *Bindung* and repetition, I suggest that we reread the concluding section of “Plato’s Pharmacy.” Here he develops the implications of the argument put forward by Plato in the *Sophist*, by which the interlacing of genres or forms (*symplokē ton eidōn*)—what Derrida designates as diacritic or differential principle—constitutes the condition for the genesis of discourse in general (*logos*).²⁷ From this argument, Derrida explains, it follows that the absolute precondition for a rigorous difference between grammar [understood as the science of the differences among the elements of the interlacing] and dialectics (or ontology) [which demarcates itself from grammar as it is oriented by meaning or the intention of truth] cannot in principle be fulfilled” (Derrida 1981, 166). This could be done only at the point of “full, absolute presence of what is” (166), whose impossibility, however, opens up the possibility of the *logos* (192). Therefore, the opposition of grammar and dialectic, presupposes the very impossibility of making a rigorous difference between the two. Within these coordinates, Derrida affirms the primordial reversibility between the movement of the truth and that of the non-truth as between two kinds of repetition. On the one hand, we have the repetition of the *eidos*, as stable and identical to itself, which secures the self-return of the truth. On

the other hand, we have the repetition of repetition, or mere repetition, which implies the loss of the truth. As Derrida points out, these repetitions cannot go the one without the other because of their being repetitions: they presuppose a possibility of repetition, a repeatability (or iterability; what Derrida calls below “the graphics of supplementarity”), which precedes and prevents their distinction. Derrida writes:

“Thus, on the one hand, repetition is that without which there would be no truth: the truth of being in the intelligible form of ideality discovers in the *eidos* that which can be repeated, being the same, the clear, the stable, the identifiable in its equality with itself. And only the *eidos* can give rise to repetition as anamnesis or maieutics, dialectics or didactics ... But on the other hand, repetition is the very movement of non-truth: the presence of what is gets lost, disperses itself, multiplies itself through mimemes, icons, phantasms, simulacra, etc. Through phenomena, already. And this type of repetition is the possibility of becoming-perceptible-to-the-senses: nonideality. This is on the side of non-philosophy, bad memory, hypomnesia, writing ... These two types of repetition relate to each other according to the graphics of supplementarity” (168-169)

Going back to SOF, we see why Derrida associates *Bindung* to the argument for the originary reversibility of classic and deconstructive repetition and, therefore, why *Bindung* is another figure of the arche-repetition evoked in Plato’s *Pharmacy*.” It is because, according to Derrida’s reading of Freud’s text, *Bindung* puts into relation the two movements of autotelicity and the demonic, of teleology and tele-communication, of the self-return of life and automatic repetition, of the economic and the aneconomic.²⁸ In other words, *Bindung* accounts for the deconstruction of sovereignty and the structural relation to the other that binds the self.

4. The drive to the proper

In the following two sections, I focus on the drive to the proper and the drive to power, which Derrida takes as essential in the Freudian economy of drives, although they are not directly formalized by Freud himself. I demonstrate that these two drives are figures of the deconstruction of the autotelicity at work, respectively, in the movement by which the organism is supposed to reappropriate its own death and in the drive itself, considered from its general structure. We see later that Derrida also thinks the drive to power as the drive to drive, precisely as it accounts for the illusionary experience of the sovereign and autotelic drive, for the effectivity of the struggle for the drive and among drives, and thus for the drive’s bond to the other.

Derrida brings to light the drive of the proper as the drive that implicitly operates in the conservative drives described by Freud in *Beyond* 4. In this chapter, Freud formulates the hypothesis that the aim of every living thing is to become inorganic and thus to reach the originary state of an inanimate thing and of death. From this perspective, the drives to self-preservation, operating in all living beings and responsible for those detours from the road to death that we call phenomena of life, are recognized a relative value. As Freud explains,

“They are component instincts whose function it is to assure that the organism shall follow its own path to death, and to ward off any possible ways of returning to inorganic existence other than those which are immanent in the organism itself. We have no longer to reckon with the organism's puzzling determination (so hard to fit into any context) to maintain its own existence in the face of every obstacle. What we are left with is the fact that the organism wishes to die only in its own fashion.” (Freud 1961, 33)²⁹

From this perspective, conservative drives work beyond the difference between life and death with a view to the organism's reappropriation of its own death: as Freud puts it, “these guardians of life, too, were originally the myrmidons of death” (33). Derrida's reading of this passage draws attention to the autotelic movement of the organism's reappropriation. He suggests that this movement can be understood as the teleological autoinstitution by which the organism writes, posts or binds itself to itself. “The component drives *are destined to insure*,” he writes, “that the organism dies *of its own death*, that it follows its own, proper path toward death” (Derrida 1987, 355). One must “send oneself [*s'envoyer*],” he goes on, “the message of one's own death” (355). Therefore, the organism does not struggle for its life but for its proper (namely, its *own* death); it does not guard itself against death but against the other that would deprive it of this proper, which is autotelicity itself. Derrida writes:

“It keeps itself from the other who might give it the death that it would not have given to itself by itself (for this is a theory of suicide deferred. or by correspondence), the death that it would not have announced to itself, signified by a sentence, a letter, or a notification that is more or less telegraphic, and of which it would be simultaneously the sender, the receiver, and the transmitter, that is, from one end of the itinerary to the other, and in every sense of the word, the *facteur*.” (356)

Ultimately, Derrida suggests that, in this scene of autotelicity (self-writing, self-posting, or self-binding) described by Freud, a drive to the proper is at stake, which is “stronger than life and death” (356). At this point, he develops his hypothesis about a drive that is implicitly at work in Freud’s text and that he understands as the figure of the organism’s self-reappropriation and deconstruction. Derrida explains that what demarcates this drive from others, making it into the strongest or most driven (*pulsive*) one, more driven than life and death drives—its force or driven(-n)-ess (*pulsivité*)—consists in the fact that it represents the organism’s movement of self-reappropriation and self-reappropriation in general. Hence, he puts forward the argument that it is also a figure of the deconstruction of this movement in that it presupposes a teleological autoinstitution, thus self-writing, and so forth. He argues:

“The drive of the proper would be stronger than life *and* than death ... because, neither living nor dead, its force does not qualify it otherwise than by its own, proper drivenness, and this drivenness would be the strange relation to oneself that is called the relation to the proper: the most driven drive is the drive of the proper, in other words the one that tends to reappropriate itself. The movement of reappropriation is the most driven drive. The proper of drivenness is the movement or the force of reappropriation. The proper is the tendency to appropriate oneself. Whatever the combinatory of these tautologies or analytic statements, never can they be reduced to the form *S is P*. Each time, concerning the drive, the force, or the movement, the tendency or the *telos*, a division must be maintained. This forbids the drive of the proper from being designated by a pleonastic expression defining the simple relation to itself of the inside. Heterology is involved, and this is why there is force, and this is why there is legacy and scene of writing, distancing of oneself and delegation, sending, *envoi*” (356-357)

Derrida develops his argument in three analytic enunciations that can be read as deconstructive tautologies: a) the movement of reappropriation is the most driven drive; b) the proper of the drivenness is the movement of reappropriation; c) the proper is the drive to the proper. They tell us about the illusory character of the experience of self-relation as reappropriation and reveal the structure of the teleological autoinstitution underlying this experience. Therefore, Derrida seals the quoted passage with the following conclusion: “The proper is not the proper, and if it appropriates itself it is that it disappropriates itself—properly, improperly.” (357). We may reread this page as if Derrida invited us to substitute the concept of the proper (and of reappropriation), which does not exist merely and by itself, with the concepts of the drive to or the struggle for the proper. They

would be the figures of difference as the liberation of the other in the process of autotelicity and thus as the self's difference from itself (its relation to the other that it is to itself).

5. The drive to power

We have finally come to Derrida's elaboration of the deconstructive concept of the drive to power that I have taken as a point of departure of my analyses. It is in the concluding pages of SOF that Derrida develops this concept to which, as anticipated, he has recourse in his late work as a figure of the deconstruction of sovereignty and ipseity. This elaboration consists in bringing to light and interrogating further a concept, that of *Bemächtigungstrieb*, which seems to play a key role in Freud's text but is not sufficiently thematized.³⁰ As we will see, Derrida understands this drive as what makes the drive in general as such, that is, as the deconstruction of the ipseity of the drive. It thus accounts for the fact that, once again, the drive in general does not merely exist by itself, and its concept should be replaced by that of the drive to drive or the drive to ipseity.

The first reference to this drive in Freud's text occurs in *Beyond 2*, where Freud analyses the motivations from which the observed child turned his experience of the departure of the mother into the game of making his object (a reel) disappear and return.³¹ Freud advances the hypothesis that the child's behavior may be explained by a certain drive to mastery that is independent from the pleasure principle to the extent that it pushes the child to bring back an unpleasant memory. "By repeating it [the overwhelming experience a *passive situation*]," he notes, "unpleasurable though it was, as a game, he took on an *active* part. These efforts might be put down to an instinct for mastery that was acting independently of whether the memory was in itself pleasurable or not" (10). Derrida draws attention to this explanation of the game as the satisfaction of another drive, that of mastery, since it announces "a certain beyond of the PP" (Derrida 1987, 325). In particular, he focuses on this drive by raising a series of questions that he postpones to the more extensive elaboration offered towards the end of his text. These questions promise to cast light on the role played by the drive to power in the *Beyond*, which Freud seems to have removed:

"But why would such a drive, (which appears in other texts by Freud, but which plays a strangely erased role here), be foreign to the PP? Why could it not be juxtaposed with a PP that is so often designated, at least metaphorically, as mastery (*Herrschaft*)? What is the difference between a principle and a drive? Let us leave these questions for a while." (325)

As we have seen in the section dedicated to the figure of *Bindung*, Freud refers to a certain drive to power independent from the PP also in *Beyond* 4 and 5, when he argues for the psychic function of binding and mastering the primary process. We noticed that, apropos of this text, Derrida evokes the idea of a tendency to stricturing and mastering that precedes the PP and at the same time prefigures it. In the concluding pages of SOF, Derrida goes back to this tendency or drive associated to the operation of *Bindung* and unfolds what he had designated earlier on as its removed role in Freud's *Beyond*, namely, that of accounting for what makes the drive in general as such, its sovereignty or ipseity. Derrida's hypothesis is that the drive to power plays a key role in Freud's economy of drives to the extent that it accounts for the drivenness of the drive in general—that is, the drive to power and mastery that informs the drive's relation to the other drives and to itself. Hence, it follows that this role is quasi-transcendental to the extent that the drive to power constitutes both the condition of possibility for the drive in general and the fact that the latter is driven to be itself by definition, that it is a drive to drive and, therefore, does not exist merely or by itself. Thus, the drive to power is the ultimate figure of the deconstruction of the self-relation and ipseity of the drive in general: it carries with itself self-posting and heterology. Derrida writes:

“Being irreducible to any other, it [the drive to mastery] seems to take part in all the others, in the extent to which the entire economy of the PP and its beyond is governed by relations of ‘mastery.’ One can envisage, then, a quasi-transcendental privilege of this drive for mastery, drive for power, or drive for domination [*emprise*]. The latter denomination seems preferable: it marks more clearly the relation to the other, even in domination *over oneself*. And the word immediately places itself in communication with the lexicon of *giving, taking, sending, or destining* ... The drive to dominate must also be the drive's *relation to itself*: there is no drive not driven to bind itself to itself and to assure itself of mastery over itself as a drive. Whence the transcendental tautology of the drive to dominate: it is the drive as drive, *the drive of the drive* [*la pulsion de pulsion*, my emphasis], the drivenness [*pulsionnalité*] of the drive. Again, it is a question of a relation to oneself as a relation to the other, the auto-affection of a *fort*: *da* which gives, takes, sends and destines itself, distances and approaches itself by its own step, the other's.” (430)

What is left in Freud's economy of drives is the withdrawal of sovereignty (that of the PP) as merely existing by itself and the effectivity of the drive to (/struggle for) sovereignty, which is shared by all drives and unfolds as a ceaseless posting or binding. As Derrida points out, if what is at stake in this economy is who the master is, then the drive for mastery cannot be dissociated from

anything that occurs in it. This drive operates outside and within each drive, in the latter's relation to the others as well as in its self-relation.³² This scenario necessarily involves power and posting, which, as we know, is intimately bound to power: therefore, Derrida argues, "the drive for power *can* no longer be derived. Nor can postal power" (404).

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¹ On the relation between this essay and the seminar *La Vie la mort*, see Derrida's opening note to the text in Derrida 1987, 259. For a close reading of the part of the seminar dedicated to Freud, I refer to Vitale 2018, 127-66. See also Trunbull 2012, which offers a summary of Derrida's text, and Hagglund 2012, that I discuss later.

² Derrida makes this hypothesis explicit in "Psychoanalysis Searches the States of Its Soul: The Impossible Beyond of a Sovereign Cruelty" (2000). Cf. Derrida 2002, 258.

³ Cf. Derrida 2005, 10-11.

⁴ On sovereignty's indivisibility and autoimmunity, see Derrida 2005, 101. On this text, see also Naas 2008, 122-46, and Bennington 2009.

⁵ On the opposition between the Declaration of Human Rights and the nation-state as a conflict of sovereignties, see Derrida 2005, 88. For the use of "countersovereignty," see Derrida 2005, 100.

⁶ Cf. Derrida 2005, 102.

⁷ Cf. Derrida 2005, 142.

⁸ Cf. Derrida 2005, 143.

⁹ Cf. Odello 2014, 366.

¹⁰ Cf. Odello 2014, 366. It is worth noting that, in a later essay, Odello links Derrida's late work on sovereignty to his early deconstruction of the autoaffection implicit in the Husserlian concept of voice (cf. Odello 2017). In so doing, it seems to me, the relevance of the deconstruction of the Freudian concept of drive for the question of sovereignty is bypassed. Later, I explore how the early work on autoaffection is re-elaborated by Derrida in the reading of the sovereignty of the pleasure principle that he offers in *SOF*. For another reading that highlights the link between sovereignty and drive to power, see Vitale 2018, where it is suggested that this link implies the impossibility of absolute power for which Derrida argues in *SOF* (cf. Vitale 2018, 163-165).

¹¹ Cf. Derrida 1989, 87-107.

¹² On *Voice and Phenomenon*, see Kates 2005, 115-57.

¹³ Cf. Derrida 2011, 60-75.

¹⁴ On Fechner's "tendency towards stability," see Freud 1961, 2-3. For Derrida's remarks on this passage, see Derrida 1987, 279-81.

¹⁵ For the expression "teleological autoinstitution," see Derrida 1987, 322.

¹⁶ Cf. Derrida 1987, 282.

¹⁷ On the movement of difference involved in auto-affection, see Derrida 2011, 70-71.

¹⁸ Cf. Derrida 1987, 284.

¹⁹ Cf. Derrida 1987, 320.

²⁰ On the figure of the "postal principle," see Derrida 1987, 191-92.

²¹ For a close reading of the generation of the mastery of the PP in relation to primary and secondary processes, see Derrida 1987, 350.

²² See Derrida 1987, 396.

²³ For this concept of volume (versus the Book), see Derrida 1978, 29.

²⁴ For an overall interpretation of “Plato’s Pharmacy,” see Naas 2010 and Senatore 2018.

²⁵ See Derrida 1987, 351.

²⁶ See Derrida 1987, 351-352.

²⁷ Cf. Derrida 1981, 165-66.

²⁸ From this perspective, *Bindung* is also another figure of *différance*. On *différance* as the impossible articulation of the two movements of the economic (by which the same returns to itself through the other) and of the aneconomic (expenditure, death, etc.), see the essay “Differance” (1966) in Derrida 1982, 19. On the relation between *Bindung* and other structures of deconstruction, see the essay “Resistances” (1992) in Derrida 1998, 27-30.

²⁹ For Derrida’s remarks on the double movement through which Freud neutralizes the risk of contradiction implicit in the existence of death and life drives, see Derrida 1987, 378.

³⁰ As Derrida recalls, the drive to mastery or *Bemächtigungstrieb* was directly thematized by Laplanche and Pontalis in their dictionary of Freud’s work (*The Language of Psycho-Analysis*, 1967). Cf. Laplanche and Pontalis 1973, 217-19.

³¹ See Freud 1961, 8-10.

³² Cf. Derrida 1987, 402-404.